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NOTES FROM THE MEDICAL PRESS

IN CHARGE OF

ELISABETH ROBINSON SCOVIL

CONTAGIOUS ABORTION.—*The Medical Record* says that veterinarians have long been familiar with the disease of cattle known as contagious abortion. In 1899, the *bacillus abortus* was discovered and identified as its cause. It has been found that cows which have been infected excrete these bacilli in their milk. It seems that human beings are susceptible to infection by this organism. Cases of abortion in women who have come in contact with herds in which this disease is prevalent have been observed, syphilis and injuries being excluded as a cause. Boiling the milk before using is recommended.

STAMMERING.—Dr. Harry F. McBeath, in a paper in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, recommends that special efforts shall be made to educate children who stutter and stammer to speak correctly, by providing special teachers in the public schools. The most common causes of the defect are conscious or unconscious imitation, shock, and the exaggerated effort to speak after a debilitating disease. After this the patient becomes unable to speak normally because he is afraid of stammering. Fear prevents him. When this is eliminated normal speech returns. The treatment consists in teaching the patient how to breathe, how to produce sound and how to articulate. Perfect respiration gives a sufficient volume of air for voice production, relieves the spasm and puts the muscles concerned in speech under the control of the will. Professor Alexander Graham Bell says voice is the material of speech, the stammerer must acquire command of a full strong, unbroken stream of sound. Articulation is of minor importance, when breathing and production of sound are mastered continued practice gives confidence to the mind.

CATHETERIZING THE NEW-BORN.—In the same journal the question is asked as to how long it is proper to wait before catheterizing a newborn child who has not micturated. The editor replies that the absence of micturation is due to the lack of urine in the bladder. The renal secretion is scanty for the first few days. Water should be given by the mouth or by enemas to help wash out the kidneys, and warm baths may be of use.

RADIUM FOR PHILANTHROPY.—The product of the newly-discovered radium ore mines in Colorado is not to be sold, but given first to the General Memorial Hospital, New York, for the treatment of cancer and other diseases and, as more is produced, to the Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, and other institutions for the same purpose.

REMEDY FOR SLEEPLESSNESS.—Dr. S. Baruch, in a letter in the *Medical Record*, highly commends the use of the wet pack as a remedy for sleeplessness. In the Vanderbilt Clinic men coming for treatment for long standing insomnia fall asleep amid the noise of falling water and other disturbances and while lying on a hard table.

EXAMINATIONS AND THE MEDICAL STUDENT.—In a paper in the *Lancet* Sir William Osler expresses the opinion that the student needs more time for quiet study, fewer classes and fewer lectures, and above all, that the incubus of examinations should be lifted from his soul. He should be tested and taught day by day, pupil and teacher working together on the same lines, only one a little ahead of the other.

DIET SOCIAL SERVICE IN DISPENSARY WORK.—In a paper most interesting to nurses, published in the *Medical Record* for November 1, twelve suggestions are given for procuring cheaper and more nourishing food. One is the use of skimmed milk in cooking; another the use of cream vegetable soups, which are cheap, palatable and nutritious; a third, the cooking of cheap cuts of meat for a long time in brown gravy, making them digestible and appetizing. Brown gravy can be made by putting a little dripping in a frying pan; when hot, add two tablespoonfuls of flour and a little chopped onion. Brown thoroughly, add sufficient water, pepper and salt. Strain if necessary.

CARE OF THE UMBILICAL STUMP.—The method used at the University of Minnesota is detailed by Dr. Fred Adair in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. After cessation of pulsation the cord is clamped near the body, the surrounding skin and cord cleansed with alcohol and the clamp removed. A ligature was tied in the groove made by the clamp. The end of the cord and the surrounding skin were painted with tincture of iodine, half strength, in some cases, in others left untreated. A sterile gauze dressing was tied over the end of the cord. The babies were oiled for three days, then washed, no tub bath being given until the navel was healed. Each day the stump and surrounding skin were washed with alcohol and the dressing changed when necessary. Oily dressings have not given good results. Gauze seems to permit of better and more rapid drying of the stump than cotton.

TUBERCLE BACILLI IN FECES.—*The Journal of Medical Research*

states that nearly all patients with tubercle bacilli in their sputum also have virulent tubercle bacilli in their feces.

SYMPTOMS OF CANCER.—A paper in the *Maryland Medical Journal* gives the early symptoms of cancer that should arrest attention and lead the sufferer to seek medical advice. A lump in the breast of a woman over thirty years of age is cancerous in 95 per cent of the cases. Under thirty a single lump is less likely to be malignant, and a number of lumps in the breast of a young woman are probably not cancerous. Irregular bleeding or discharge from the uterus may result from cancer. This is especially true of profuse menstruation or bleeding between periods. No time should be lost in securing an examination. A hard lump, or persistent sore on the lips, tongue or mucous membrane of the mouth, especially when opposite a rough tooth, are pre-cancerous. Scabs and sores on the face or hands, rough discolored areas on the skin, growing warts and moles, particularly those that have been injured and bleed easily are pre-cancerous and are easily cured if taken early. Indigestion and constipation may indicate cancer of the stomach or bowels.

There is no specific cure for cancer, its cause has not yet been discovered. The best hope at present lies in early and complete eradication by a surgical operation.

POWDERED SUGAR IN INOPERABLE CANCER OF THE CERVIX. A writer in a German medical journal has found satisfactory results in the use of sugar in inoperable, ulcerating cancer of the uterus. Through a speculum the necrotic surfaces are cleansed and thickly covered with powdered sugar. The discharge diminishes, the odor disappears, the gangrenous surfaces are cleansed and sometimes the improvement is so great as almost to simulate a cure. The application is repeated daily.

HEREDITY AND TUBERCULOSIS.—*The Interstate Medical Journal* quoting from a German contemporary, says Kuthy's observations lead him to conclude that the children of tuberculosis parents so far from being predisposed to the disease show evidence of a relative immunity to it and if infected the disease in them tends to run a benign course.

HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT OF CONTAGIOUS DISEASES.—Dr. D. L. Richardson, superintendent of the Providence, R. I., City Hospital, writing in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, controverts the usual view that scarlet fever, diphtheria, whooping cough, measles, small pox, mumps and rubella are air-borne diseases. Instead of complete isolation, reliance is placed on strict aseptic nursing for the prevention of infection. Every new nurse and employee who has to go into the wards is thoroughly impressed with the idea that if he gets sick

it is most likely his own fault and probably due to putting his fingers or something else contaminated in the ward into his mouth. Employees understand that if cross infection develops, they are liable to investigation as to the care they exercise in their work.

The nurses all sleep in the same home and eat in the same dining room and are allowed to leave the hospital when off duty. When the nurse goes on duty she goes to the dressing-room for that ward where she has two metal lockers, one for clean and one for infected clothing. She changes dress, cap, bib and apron for ward clothes. When going off duty she washes face and hands and then changes her infected uniform. The sleeves of the uniforms are either short or rolled up. The nurse washes her hands with bar soap in running water, using a brush, and dries them on an individual towel, every time she touches a patient or anything in his room. After handling measles and chicken pox a one-minute immersion of the hands in an antiseptic solution is required. If she comes in close contact with the patient, she puts on a gown.

USE OF HEROIN SPREADING RAPIDLY AMONG DRUG FIENDS

According to information gathered by the United States Department of Agriculture, there has been a sudden and very significant increase in the use by persons with a drug habit of the little-known but very dangerous drug called "heroin." The sales of this drug have recently increased greatly, particularly in those states which have rigid laws preventing the indiscriminate sale of morphine and cocaine. Investigation of the subject establishes the fact that many drug victims who formerly used morphine and cocaine and who under the new laws find it difficult to obtain these substances have begun using heroin, the sale of which is not as yet as carefully restricted under state laws. The drug is said to be fully as dangerous as morphine and by many is held to be much worse, for the reason that it occasionally kills the victim outright and its habit is far harder to overcome than the use of the other drugs. The Department, pending further action, specially warns all people who are unfamiliar with the drug to avoid all preparations containing the substance and to take it only on the prescription of reputable physicians.